

NRFC SPOTLIGHT

USING VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY IN FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance



FATHERS
INCORPORATED



This National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) spotlight provides an overview of key points from the April 22, 2020 webinar *Using Virtual Technology in Fatherhood Programs*.



WATCH THE WEBINAR

Access the webinar and associated materials at fatherhood.gov/2020-virtual-tech-webinar

For additional information see the NRFC Tip Sheet: *Internet Security: Ensuring Confidentiality and Privacy When Using Virtual Technology*

fatherhood.gov/2020/internet-security

“

When selecting a virtual tool, think about its capacity to provide the services required for your audience. When you're looking at a vendor, do they own your data or do you?



JEFF STREET

VIA CONSULTING GROUP

SELECTING TECHNOLOGY

- How old is your computer system? If it's more than 4 to 5 years old, it may be time to upgrade.
- How reliable is your Internet access? Do you have enough bandwidth for streaming?
- How does your technology align with your programmatic goals? Do you need to modify your goals for virtual services?
- How will you ensure confidentiality and privacy for information shared during group sessions?

“

Preparation is key. You’ve got to prepare to engage these guys. If your content or presentation isn’t valuable to them, they’re not coming back.



PATRICK PATTERSON
NRFC/ICF



PREPARATION

- Make sure you have complete knowledge of the technology you are using. Don’t learn “on the job.” Practice videos or calls are always prudent.
- Walk through any new virtual platforms with all staff.
- Test different platforms if necessary.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- What technology do they have?
 - Can they download virtual platforms to their phone?
- What is their knowledge and comfort level with the virtual world?
 - Do they have free access to the platforms you plan to use?

MOVING FROM IN-PERSON TO VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION

1. If you already have established and respected connections with your clients, the conversion to virtual is not as hard.
2. Schedule one-on-one conversations before the first group session, and explore possible barriers and solutions to their engagement.
3. Make sure you start at an elementary level; allow time for everyone to get used to the technology.
4. Remind participants of established ground rules and discuss any new online expectations.

PRACTICE PROFESSIONALISM REGARDLESS OF YOUR LOCATION

Be aware of your background environment. Think about what your audience will see behind you.

- If you are working from home, be sure others at home know your video times so they do not disturb your call.
- Put pets in a different room.
- Dress as you would for in-person group sessions.

WORK AS A TEAM

A. Don't try to do everything yourself.

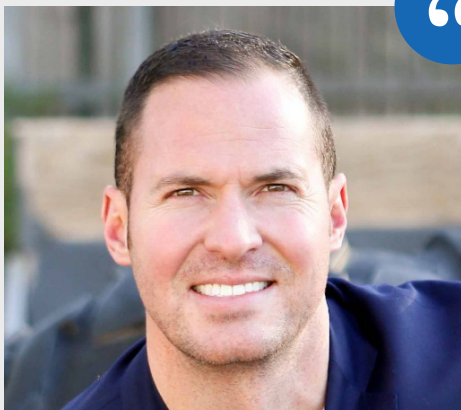
Work with team members who can help with different production components. For example, on Zoom or similar platforms, it is always a good practice to designate someone on your team as a co-host.

B. Team members can also:

- 1 Help monitor the main online "room" and any breakout or chat conversations.
- 2 Track all incoming comments, and make sure they are addressed.
- 3 Step in if you lose your Internet connection.

IF DADS DON'T HAVE RELIABLE ACCESS TO WI-FI OR VIDEO

- Individual phone calls or group conference calls will work.
- Record group sessions (audio and video) so dads can review later.
 - Share recordings and other materials via email, website, Facebook, or other forums they can access.



“

If people aren't secure in the environment, they're less likely to participate at a high level.”

JUSTIN BATT

DADDY SATURDAY



FACILITATING GROUP SESSIONS ON A VIRTUAL PLATFORM

1. Keep your first sessions to an hour or 90 minutes. If you schedule longer sessions, build in bathroom and other breaks.
2. Log in early. Be there for informal chat with anyone who's early—the same as you would for in-person meetings.
 - You can lose people if you're late logging in.
3. Find ways to keep participants focused and involved.
 - Use visual, on-screen icebreakers.
 - Call them by their names.
 - Ask simple, open-ended questions.
 - Use brief case studies or scenarios. When presenting, you can ask: "What would you do in this situation?"
 - Be engaging and relevant.
 - Have fun.
4. Invite guest speakers, just as you would for in-person sessions.
5. Prepare key takeaway points to emphasize.

“

It really doesn't matter how you're connected to them; as long as you're engaging them, they're going to stay with you.”



KENNETH BRASWELL

NRFC/FATHERS INCORPORATED

CONNECT THROUGH A VARIETY OF VIRTUAL AND DIGITAL CHANNELS



“

Allow people ‘time to breathe’. Let them get their thoughts together; you don’t have to fill every empty or quiet moment.

PATRICK PATTERSON

NRFC/ICF



Use social media to engage dads and post information on upcoming activities.



Share external podcasts or create your own.



Organize a live online event that dads and their kids can join virtually from home.



Have staff members write blogs to emphasize key program content.



Create videos and post them to YouTube or Facebook.



Host a virtual job fair with employers and program participants.

HELP NON-RESIDENT DADS STAY CONNECTED WITH KIDS

- Encourage them to:
 - Talk or read a bedtime story via video calls.
 - Create audio or video messages and send them to the mom or other family members to share with the kids.

“

Show your empathy for what everyone is going through right now. People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

”

KENNETH BRASWELL

NRFC/FATHERS INCORPORATED

